

business spectator

Growing Darwin

EARLY in November the Urban Development Institute of Australia (NT) welcomed the announcement by Halikos Pty Ltd about the start of work on "North Crest", located on the old Berrimah Farm site.

The new suburb will add another set of housing options at an alternative location to housing already being developed in new suburbs like Zuccoli and The Heights in Palmerston and Muirhead in Darwin's north.

These modern new developments are collectively another large step in Darwin's growth, which has progressed steadily since Goyder's team arrived to survey the site for the city in 1869. Darwin has seen many significant changes over the past 150 years of development. There are now developments in areas which were previously used for traditional hunting and gathering and, more recently, for various recreational uses such as riding horses and motorbikes.

Our history points to continued growth for Darwin into the future. But this growth will need to be well-planned and well managed to ensure everyone can live efficiently and sustainably. Achieving this goal requires an understanding of some common urban myths concerning planning.

MYTH 1 – WE HAVE AN ABUNDANCE OF DEVELOPABLE LAND

This is a myth because there is limited

land near to services, or with the capacity to be able to be serviced. Factors such as storm surge zones, flood-prone areas, biting insect zones, mangrove protection zones and their buffer areas, as well as flyover corridors for our airport, Aboriginal and Commonwealth land, mean that sites available for development are far less abundant than many people think. We need to use available land in the most efficient way.

MYTH 2 – SOUTHERN PLANNING PRINCIPLES DON'T APPLY TO THE NT

Sound planning principles are equally applicable to Darwin as they are for any other Australian city. For example, the trend towards reduced dependence on motor vehicles is already occurring in Darwin, with increasing numbers of people walking or cycling to work. These workers require higher density, affordable housing (apartment living) in nodal areas close to efficient public transport or within

walking or cycling distance of employment centres.

Forcing people to live further out of the city enables them to take advantage of cheaper property prices, but impacts on their budget through higher commuting costs and the necessity to travel more to access various services.

MYTH 3 – WE DON'T NEED TO CATER FOR RETIRES BECAUSE WE HAVE A YOUNG DEMOGRAPHIC

In reality our retiree population is growing rapidly and it is important that we keep older people here as part of a balanced population. Many retirees seek to live in or close to the CBD because of the access this provides to a range of amenities and a desire (sometimes a necessity) to reduce their dependence on vehicular travel. A secure, low-maintenance, conveniently located apartment can be locked up during periods

of travel is an ideal lifestyle choice for this demographic, particularly if it can be bought for less than the value of their suburban home.

Fortunately, the independent NT Planning Commission is well aware of the above myths and has identified the specific parts (nodes) in our inner and mid suburbs which are best suited to higher density living to supplement new suburban developments.

Their planning processes have involved extensive research and community consultation, as well as detailed knowledge and understanding of current trends which will directly affect Darwin.

Areas identified for higher density living are universally recognised as a critically important element in making nearby retail centres operate more efficiently, irrespective of which Australian city we might live in. For example, more people living within

and close to the Darwin CBD means there are more customers for many retail businesses, which helps those businesses to operate sustainably. This in turn will make our CBD a more vibrant and desirable place.

The same is true for any of Darwin and Palmerston's urban shopping centres — more local residents means more customers and more viable and vibrant businesses.

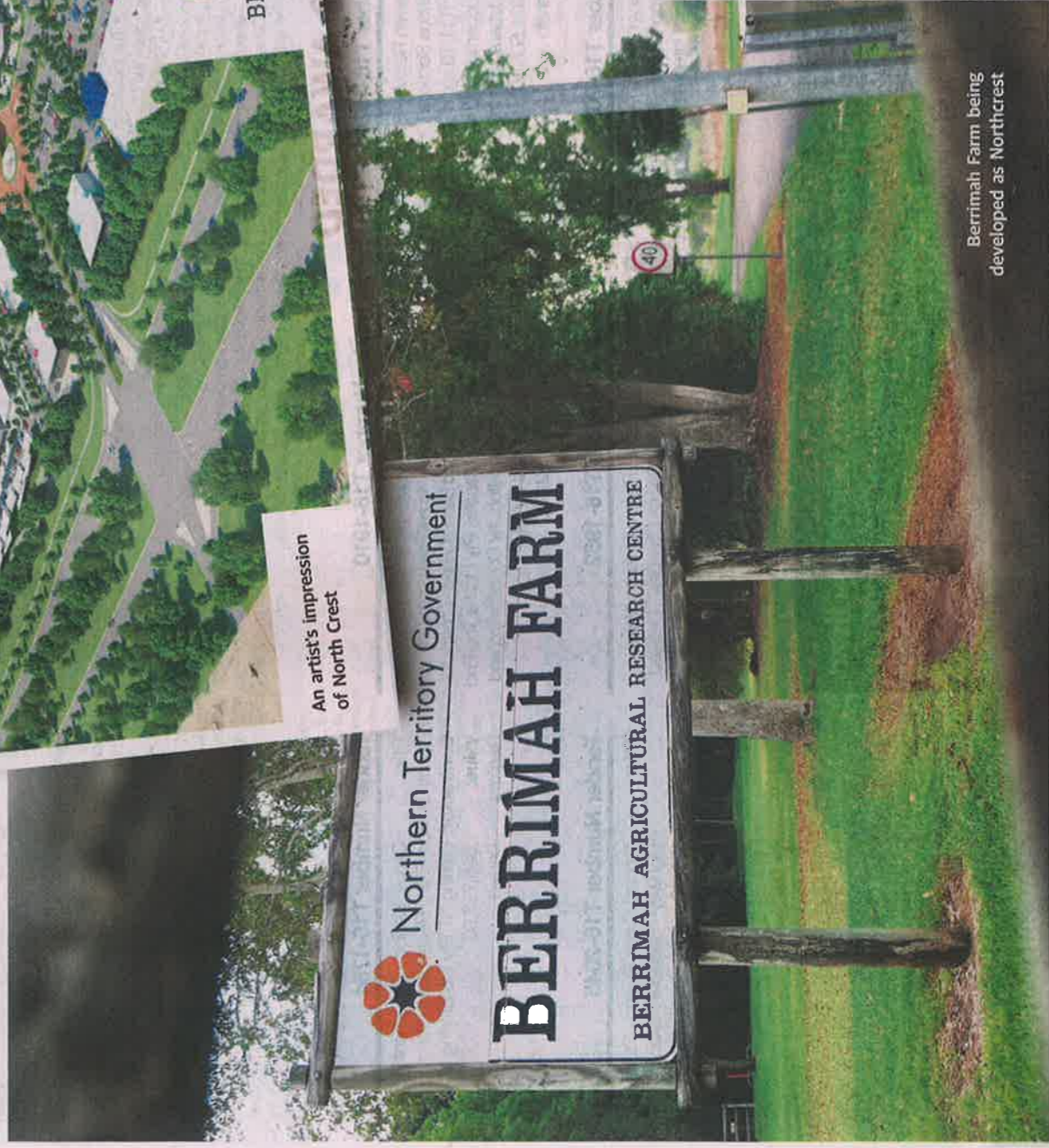
Darwin has a low population by Australian capital city standards, which makes it even more important that we use our resources for public transport and other infrastructure in the most efficient ways possible.

The development industry provides a wide range of housing options across all of our suburbs and in the rural area, as well as in the Darwin CBD. This diversity in areas close to a range of employment centres means we have a strong framework for a sustainable city into the future. The new "North Crest" development, along with other current greenfield developments and strategic infill, add more pieces to the impressive mosaic which is steadily making Darwin a more liveable and sustainable city.



An artist's impression of North Crest

The Urban Development Institute of Australia CEO Graeme Suckling



Berrimah Farm being developed as Northcrest